1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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workers, was founded as an ordinary agricultural village not more than about sixty years ago. But such opportunities decreased throughout the nineteenth and this century. One inevitable result was to increase wealth differences and to make them more permanent.

A major consequence of increased wealth differences has been the strain placed on internal solidarity by "envy" (*hisạ*; Hindi: *hinsḳa*) and even more by fear of "envy." What this term conveys is concealed malicious intent based upon desire for what another possesses. Though Santal society has long been plagued with accusations of witchcraft, the notion that its practice is almost invariably deliberate and that it arises from envy is of modern origin. Though it is recognized that men may be "envious," it is thought that females most often are guilty and that it is only they who practice witchcraft. Fertile grounds for envy, and attendant witchcraft, appeared when wealthy Santal began using their capital to hire other Santal, to loan money, paddy, and seed at interest, to buy forest land, and even in a few cases to invest in various small-scale enterprises. Relations arising from these investments are often strained and a source of resentment. Envy also arises from observation of what wealth procures in terms of traditional Santal pleasures and from its use in settling disputes.

Aside from the exacerbation of "envy," which increased wealth differences produced, the market imposed other, more general strains. It is difficult to square the basic reciprocity of relations in a kin society like that of the Santal with the impersonal and contractual relations of the market. Though the Santal struggle over land with as much ferocity as any peasants, they find it hard to insist on strictly market relations with other commodities, especially if pressed by kinsmen. A few Santal

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177 554 871 181 house, he is like a *Diku*; before him I feel like a black Santal." I have heard other Santal remark that they could not sing or talk freely before a certain educated Santal who was a village leader because his bearing made them ill at ease. It seems particularly difficult to carry on the normal "pleasure" activities such as dancing, singing, drinking, and even convivial conversation, before such august Santal. The same gap seen from the vantage point of the educated is expressed in the following remarks of an educated woman:

> I am happy now to be living in the city because both my child and I were sick from "envy" [i.e., being "envied" by others] when we lived in the *bustee*; all are healthy here. I never danced or sang in the village though I liked to watch; my mother and sister danced but I didn't. When very young I did, but after I started going to school, I didn't. Some don't send their children to school because others will have "envy" and say that highly educated girls will be outcasted for marrying into other castes; that is not true. Why shouldn't we study as high as money allows? *Diku* girls do.

[192] Less eloquent educated Santal simply explain matters by saying that they have become "embarrassed" (*lajao*) to dance, sing, etc.

177 871 If differential Hinduization is the major component of the gap created by education, it is not the only component. An additional divisive effect of education is that it gives the student a secular orientation which is highly differentiating but of limited effect since only those with college educations acquire it thoroughly. There are various manifestations of this orientation, but a particularly interesting example which I have discussed elsewhere[1] concerns differences in beliefs about witch-

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[1] Orans 1959.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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craft in village, *bustee*, and city. There is increasing secularization of witchcraft belief from village to city, with the *bustee* occupying something of an intermediate position. Among the *bustee* Santal, some are skeptical about the existence of witches, or at least claim to be; I reported such remarks as "Yes, I have seen lights from what are said to be witches, but who knows if they really were? I have never seen a witch myself although others say that they have. Since I have not seen for myself, how can I say whether or not they exist?" Many city Santal argued that witchcraft was not properly speaking a supernatural phenomenon at all but a kind of magical technique, only seemingly supernatural, and referred to it appropriately enough as "mesmerism." A few city Santal positively denied the existence of witchcraft, calling it a superstition of the "ignorant." One student in the Jamshedpur Cooperative College gave a totally naturalistic explanation. In the course of his studies he had read a psychology book which said that people frequently imagine that they see things that they are very much afraid of. He accepted this as a convincing explanation of witchcraft congenial to his acquired secular outlook.

In an earlier interpretation of these differences in belief I gave too much credit to mere residence in the environs of Jamshedpur and the cultural contacts it entailed. Later in my field work I encountered views among the highly educated villagers which were not different than those of the city Santal. I did note, even at the time, that there were no signs of such secularism among the father or the Santal neighbors of the Jamshedpur Cooperative College student mentioned above; indeed, these uneducated Santal found the psychological explanation quite unconvincing. Examination of background material

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177 on those city Santal having a secular view of witchcraft indi-
754 cates that almost all were exceptionally well-educated. The
871 differences between village, *bustee*, and city Santal in witchcraft
184 belief are statistical, reflecting the differences in education between the members of these three kinds of communities.

184 Increased education is significant for the solidarity of the
556 Santal since it is not equally distributed among them. Generally,
871 it widens the gap between the Santal who are already wealthier and occupy prestigeful hereditary positions and the mass of Santal without wealth or position. This differential distribution of education results from its cost; there are the direct expenses for tuition and books and living expenses away from home, plus the sacrifice of labor which farm families in particular must make in sending their children to school. The cultural gap
[754] furthers the social gap. As indicated, the educated and traditional elite are "envied" and fearful of "envy"; in spite of the secular explanations given of witchcraft, many Santal working and living in Jamshedpur are reluctant to return to their villages for fear of witchcraft and the "envy" which is held to motivate it. The same fear prompts the powerful and wealthy who have children attending school to keep those children out of their native village, lest their presence arouse "envy."

177 Besides straining internal relations by accentuating divisive
184 tendencies already present, by increasing Hinduization educa-
871 tion reduces the differences between Santal and Hindu and thereby threatens the external aspect of solidarity. The very orientation and practices which served so well to separate the Santal from the Hindu are simultaneously the attributes of low status in the prevailing system of caste ranking. To maintain these practices which serve solidarity so well is to forego the

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Most of the young children of Santal industrial workers aspire to a "sitting-down job," if not in Delhi then at least in TISCO. The tension induced by the conflict between rank improvement and the pleasure complex is evident in the demeanor of the young Santal trying to resist the old siren songs of their culture. The Santal of ordinary means recognizes that life is generally short and hazardous and that the path to success is arduous and the goal uncertain of attainment. Under such circumstances it is remarkable how many Santal are committed to rank improvement.

The disruptive force of "envy" and associated witchcraft has been attacked in two fashions. All but the most isolated Santal now believe that "envy," and with it witchcraft and much disease, will disappear as the Santal, especially their females, become educated. The rationale for this hope is that education will impart virtue and improve rank; how then will it be possible for the virtuous and prosperous to be envious? As the Santal point out, the "educated *diku* women do not practice witchcraft, so neither will ours once they are similarly educated."

The second anti-"envy" doctrine is more sophisticated, has Great-Traditional qualities, and is a genuine example of cultural innovation. It was developed by a brilliant Santal high-school graduate, Ragnath Murmu, who lived for some time in a *bustee*, where he carried on "cultural work"; he has since retired to his native village. According to his view, there are witches who practice witchcraft because of "envy." However, they can cause sickness only in a person who has committed some sin. The solution to the problem of illness which is caused in part by witchcraft and in part by one's own sin is to live a

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668 virtuous life and to adhere scrupulously to the traditional reli-
754 gious practices.

Ragnath Murmu is one of the founders of a cultural organi-
668 zation known as *Sarna Dharam Semlet'*, i.e., Sacred Grove Religious Organization. This organization, which today is a spearhead of the cultural movement, is an offshoot of the Jharkhand party. It was established before the census of 1951 for the purpose of persuading the tribals of the region to return their religion as "*Sarna.*" Just as Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj pressure for Hindu returns as a sign of national solidarity, so Semlet' was created to show the solidarity of tribals. The battle over cultural identification is waged by both sides but it is social identification which is chiefly at stake. Though Semlet' began its campaign only a short time before the 1951 census was taken, 237,310 tribals from the state of Bihar did return themselves as followers of the "*Sarna*" religion (Census
[792] of India, Vol. V. Bihar, Part II, A Tables, p. 309). There is, of course, no native word in any of the tribal languages which designates their religion, and the word *Sarna*, meaning Sacred Grove in Munda, has had to be officially chosen for the purpose. Since it is not even the word for Sacred Grove in Santali or Ho, it faces further difficulties, and if it is to be widely adopted it will require a good deal of explaining, especially to the mass of non-literate Santal and Hos.

[754] Whatever its success in the census, under the leadership of Ragnath Murmu the organization has taken on a number of cultural functions, such as propagating Mr. Murmu's theory of witchcraft. While its chief ideologist is Mr. Murmu, its treasurer and secretary are TISCO workers. Among the officers only the secretary is illiterate, a deficiency for which he makes

c. Divorce.

Formerly people were separated only for two reasons, viz., the woman's adultery and witchcraft. Nowadays, if husband and wife will not live in peace, they "tear the leaves" also for this reason. From the time that they have commenced to take co-wives, a wife also can demand divorce for this reason. If they are separated on account of witchcraft, a woman may be married again without having had "the leaves torn", otherwise only when this has been properly done. The customary rule of separation because of the woman's adultery has been mentioned above. 586 178 586 754

If anyone's wife has been established to be a witch by five witch-finders, her husband will, together with the village council, give her in charge in the house of her parents or of her male relatives, and even a child of hers he will rob her of and keep; and if she has a sucking child, he will afterwards bring home this child of his, paying the woman for its support. There is no punishment or the like for this act, only the village council will get food. And if afterwards a daughter grows up and is married, this woman will not get the cloth given to a mother. 586

Nowadays, when a divorce is due to their not living in peace, the guilty person will have to pay a fine. If a man leaves his wife without any fault of hers, he will not get the brideprice paid back, and he will himself have to pay damages. Any children will belong to the man, and he will have to give his wife a cow, one bundle paddy, one brass-cup, and a piece of women's cloth. And if she feeds a sucking child of his, she will, when he fetches the child, get separately for this sixteen maunds paddy and one cloth. If there should have been any expense in connexion with the child during fever or illness, this also the mother will get.

If husband and wife separate on account of the woman's fault, the man will get the brideprice paid back, and the woman will get nothing. Food for the village council sitting in the matter they will take from both sides, five four-anna bits from each.

When the wife demands divorce because the husband has taken a co-wife, the man will not get the brideprice paid back, and he will have to give a cow, one bundle paddy, a cloth, and a brass-cup.

They tear the leaves in the following way: The village headmen and the village people of both sides come together. They put a loṭa with water on the ground, and make the husband and wife stand with this between them, facing each other. The headman of the husband's village then says: Well, you so and so, we the people of our village, invocating the Day bonga, the Five mountain spirits, and the ancestors of old, having got good omens, a bullock on the right-hand side, a woodpecker on the left-hand side, we bound together, joined together the bonds like the laṛ climber, the bando climber[*]; for one day we did

[*] Laṛ here refers to the jam laṛ, Bauhinia Vahili, W. & A. Bando is Spatholobus Roxburghii, Scott.

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X. BELIEFS CONNECTED WITH THE BONGAS

a. The witches.

754 Witchcraft[1] is the great trouble with us Santals. Because of witchcraft people in the village become enemies, the door of relatives is shut, father and sons quarrel, brothers are separated, husband and wife are divorced, and in the country people kill each other. If there were no witches, we should have constant great happiness. The Europeans judge well in all matters, so far as their knowledge goes; but in connexion with witchcraft they are somehow or other blinded; we cannot understand it. The witches eat us; and when we catch them and worry them just a little, the magistrates again turn the matter round and resort to imprisonment; we feel great distress; what can we possibly do, so that it might go well with us; we are utterly bewildered. Also when we explain it to the magistrates, they do not believe it; they say: Well then, let her eat my finger; then only shall I believe that she is a witch, — and then they jail you. The witches do not eat using a vessel and a knife, quite so; by sorcery they send people off to the other world, straight away. Formerly the village headman and his deputy were subduing them, and if they would not be peaceful, they would, together with the village people, drive them away from the village after having disgraced them; but nowadays the magistrates have made them utterly audacious, so that we men have become absolutely disheartened.

The word of a man does not go any more; the women have become the absolute rulers in this age. If you say just a little to her, she will at once throw it into your mouth; fearing this you keep quiet, what can you do else.

The witches have their councils at night, in a forest or an open plain somewhere. When they go out, they put a worn broom or the like down on the bedstead with the husband, and he thinks: my wife is here, because on account of the magic he sees this broom like his wife; but the wives have gone to the bongas to be married to them. It is told they do not go on foot; they climb up into some tree or other and go by magic like the wind. They come down at the playing ground of the bongas and dance with the bongas; they call tigers to themselves; they comb them, kiss them; then they subdue the bongas and make them swear that they shall not appear when divination is made. Having acted in this way they return home at cockcrow.

[1] Cf. Bodding: Witchcraft among the Santals. Oslo Ethnografiske Museums Skrifter, vol. 5, p. 5, Oslo 1940.

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The witches are eager to make disciples; even small girls they eat(en), in order that the seed may live on when they themselves die. They wander about at night with a lamp; they enter the houses of other people and make the girls get up, to make them their disciples; and if they are not willing, they say to them: If you do not learn, you will die, or: A tiger will eat you. Therefore these are, from fear, eager to learn. When the disciples have got up, the witches put a broom round their loin, and, taking a worn-out winnowing-fan in the armpit, they go with lamps to the sacred grove. There they offer fowls and eat them after having cooked them with rice and made cakes of them. They make the disciples comb tigers, and if they are afraid of these and therefore are unwilling, they say to them: They don't do you anything, girls, don't be afraid. And they teach them incantations and charm-songs; thereupon they say to them, in order to give them initiation: Now, girl, eat your father, or your eldest brother. If they are unwilling, they cause them to become ill or to become mad. With a crib-straw[1] plant they scrape out their liver and lungs, and when they have cooked this, they make the disciples eat this first. From this day all mercy of the disciples ends; if they become angry, they will even eat their own child or father or brother, and they have no mercy on their own husband either; they eat them.

They say, as the story goes, that some time long ago the witches were daily making two young men get up and were taking them along with them to drum the dancing drum for them. One day the witches took out the liver and lungs of a young man and brought it with them, and from the house of those people they brought along to the sacred grove one earthenware vessel of liver, rice, salt, turmeric, big and small earthenware vessels. Having brought it there, they cooked the liver and lungs; they also gave the two young men a portion to eat. But those two did not eat it; they hid it in a fold of their clothes; the beer only they drank. When they had finished dancing with the bongas, they returned home. The next day the young man whose liver and lungs they had taken out got convulsions. Seeing this people became helpless and said: What has happened to him? What has happened to him? The two young men felt pity; therefore they said: Do seize such and such women, then the man will get well. Then they seized and brought the wives of the village headman and of his deputy and of several other well-to-do people in accordance with what the two young men had told. When they came, they were quite unwilling to confess; they began to scold; their husbands were also furious; they said: Prove it against us, you two, otherwise we shall certainly not call you good. Then the two young men before the village council took out of their clothes the portions given to them and said to them: Look here, Sirs, here is the proof of guilt. Seeing this the witches and their husbands were silenced.

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[1] Saccharum perlaria, Roxb.

[2] Cuis Ete. Kui — Bodding.

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754 Thereupon they brought the Pargana. He gave this order: Do bring a battle-axe. They brought one. Then the Pargana said to the witches: Do make him well; otherwise we shall cut off your heads; you are the firewood, he is the dead body. Then out of fear they made the man well. Witches who have not made ill people well, have in many places been pruned (got their head cut off).

If the wives of the village headman and of his deputy are witches, it is very difficult to get it proved against them, because their husbands will not let it be admitted. Formerly, it is told, an ojha once became angry and called the wives of the village headman and of his deputy witches. The headman and the others said to him: If you do not prove this, we shall make your head fall down. He answered them: Some day I shall show it to you, so that you see it with your own eyes. Then they became quiet. One evening when he had had his food, the ojha went to the sacred grove taking bow and arrow with him. Climbing a tree there he was waiting and watching.

At the time after supper the women whom he had slandered as being witches went to the sacred grove. Just as they had reached there, they danced round once. Thereupon one of them became spirit-possessed. Then they called a tiger to come, naming his name Lukhu. They whistled twice for the tiger; then two came quickly. They combed both of them; they were kissing them; at that time the man in wait suddenly shot the big tiger. Then the tiger thought: these have apparently done something to me. Being angry for this he bit and killed the witches, every one of them, in a mash; also the other tiger he shot with an arrow and killed; thereupon he went home.

When it dawned next morning, they saw: their (wives) were not there; they were asking each other in their different houses, saying: what has become of our (wives)? Then the ojha said to them: Go towards the sacred grove and look for your (wives); I saw them go in that direction. Then they went there; they saw them, the two tigers had bitten and killed them in a mash, and the two tigers were also lying there. Then as they spread the report of this, the people of the neighbourhood assembled and saw them. At that time the ojha told them the whole story. From that time we have been believing in witches.

539 754 The ancestors of old tell, they say, that Marañ buru was teaching the men witchcraft; but by a trick the women got the magic power first. One day, it is told, the men had sat down in council to consult each other, what they should do with their scolding women. They said: We are men, how is it that our word does not count? When we say a couple of words to the women, they commence to scold shamelessly; we will not stand such behaviour. Then they said: Come along, let us go to Marañ buru; from him we shall learn some kind of secret skill, that we may subdue these women. They then fixed a time, viz.: At midnight we shall meet in such and such forest. They went; they called on Marañ buru to come; they called loudly: O grandfather, do come here, we a large

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number of men, have come to thee in distress. Marah buru came quickly and asked them: What trouble is it that you have, grandchildren? They told their grief, and they implored him that he should teach them some secret skill to subdue their women.

Marah buru said to them: Well, I shall teach you, but only if you make marks with your blood on these leaves. When they heard this, they became very much afraid and said to him: To-morrow we shall come again and, giving the marks, receive the secret skill. Thereupon they went away; but their women had come there secretly, and had from a hidden place heard exactly all that was said. Then they said: This, as we have heard, is the justice of these men; before they married us, they were continually following after us like dogs; now when we have become wives, they deem us bad; they are thinking of killing us. Well, we shall have a look at them, who of us are able to kill. When they had said this, they quickly went in advance of the men, following a path. On the way they decided what they should do. The men also came afterwards. As soon as the men came, the women met their husbands with caresses; therefore the men thought; they have become good by themselves; what shall we go there for?

Next day the women prepared excellent rice and curry for their husbands, and in the evening they poured out any amount of beer for them. The men drank themselves drunk and tumbled down on the ground. Then the women called on each other and assembled, they dressed themselves in male loin-clothes and turbans and fixed goat hair on their lips and started to go to the forest to Marah buru. They called out to him: O grandfather, please come quickly, our women have been plaguing us day and night.

Marah buru came at once. Then they said to him: Do bring your leaves out quickly; we shall make our different marks; we are not able to stand the worrying of the women. Marah buru brought out his Sal-leaves, and they pricked themselves, and with the blood they made the marks of their respective husbands. Thereupon Marah buru taught them incantations and charms and initiated them in the eating of people. Smiling and laughing they returned home.

As the men were not getting up quickly next morning, the women abused and cowed them in every possible way. The men got up half-blinded and were rubbing their eyes with their hands; they awoke from their sleep, and that the women had not become gentle-minded, this they also got to understand. Feeling sick they came together to take counsel together. There they said: Come, let us go! Whatever Marah buru may say to us, we must learn the secret skill. Consequently at night they went to the forest, and they earnestly implored Marah buru: Do, father, please teach us, the women are tormenting us awfully.

When Marah buru heard this, he was astonished and said to them: Why, I have given you the secret skill; what is it you wish to get again and again? Then the men unanimously said: How is that, when have you given it to us? Why, since that day we

539 have never come here, as you know. Hearing this Maraṅ buru became dumbfounded and
said to them: I have given it to you, what else have I done. Look here, look at your
754 own marks! Seeing their different marks the men said: The marks are ours; but we have never made the marks; somebody, who knows who, have made our marks.

Then Maraṅ buru put his hand to his cheek and was thinking it over in his mind; then it suddenly dawned upon him: The women have made a mere child even of me. And becoming angry he said to the men: Do make marks here at once, we shall see these deceitful women. They made their marks, and he initiated them as ojhas and witchfinders, in order that they might be able to find out the witches and punish them. From that time the witches and the ojhas and witchfinders are enemies. But the ojhas and the witchfinders are unable to do anything, because the witches easily subdue their bongas, so that they are unable to catch them quickly; other people emerge in the divination, and being hoodwinked the witchfinders name other people.

Some people say that the witches, ojhas, and witchfinders have all learnt from Kạmru guru. It is reported that very long ago our ancestors were disciples with him. With regard to becoming ojhas that is quite so, because ojhas mention him first; but as regards witches and witchfinders, I don't know whether they have learnt from Kạmru guru or not; so far as invoking is concerned, they do not invoke him; therefore my opinion is, that they have not learnt from him.

b. The ojhas.

756 To become ojhas[3] we have really learnt from Kạmru guru[4]. Very long ago his country and our country were near to each other; our ancestors have told us this. The work of the ojhas is of six kinds: 1) they make divination; 2) they sow rice; 3) they bite people or rub them with a ball of rice flour; 4) they dig up bongas; 5) they exorcize bongas; and 6) they give medicine to people. If ill people do not recover by the medicine, the
755 village people get an ojha to make divination. They bring oil and Sal-leaves to him, and, sitting down, he smears oil on two leaves, and with an incantation he rubs the leaves: Oil oil, mustard oil, man mustard oil, bạru oil, Mahua oil, castor oil, bherṇḍa oil, rae rui mustard oil, this oil, reading, what will appear, a witch may appear, an imp may appear, a female demon may appear, poison may appear, who reads, the guru reads, the guru's knowledge, mae (the mother) reads, do read by Kạhri's knowledge, by Kamru's grace, grace he reads[5].

Having done this he puts it down on the ground for a little while. Thereupon taking off one leaf he looks at it, and they ask him: Do make an offering first; what have you found? Only when you tell us, we shall understand. Now the ojha has, before making

[3] Cf. the writer's Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore, Asiatic Society of Bengal's Memoirs, Vol. X. [4] See Dictionary s. v. Kạmbru. [5] This formula has been dealt with in Santal Medicine.

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e. Planting branches.

755 787 Branch planting is done as follows: If witches or bongas or disease is shown by the divination, they plant branches at the water's edge to prove this. To stand as a witness they first plant a branch in the middle; thereafter one in the name of the house-bonga; thereupon one in the name of the bongs of the house-wife's old home, thereupon one in the name of the man's brother and male relatives; thereupon one in the name of the daughters and the sisters; thereupon one in the name of an epidemic, and after this they plant one branch in the name of each separate house in the village. They apply sindur to every branch as it is planted. Thereupon they scatter out rice and make invocation: Ile greeted then, Sin bonga in heaven! Thou art spread out like a mat, the four corners, the four worlds thou hast covered; here then we are trying to find, to trace by ordeal; what is guilty thou wilt show guilty, may that dry up, may it wither — thou wilt call witnesses, — and if it is not so, mayest thou sprout like a sedge sprouts; thou wilt remain unchanged (that is the witness branch).

Again they speak: Have a care then, if thou art a bonga, may this dry up, may it wither; if it is not thou, may it remain unchanged. Thou wilt call witnesses. In the same way they make invocations in the name of all at each branch. When they have acted in this way, they go home. Some five hours afterwards they return to have a look at the branches. Which branch, standing in anybody's name, has died, they find out for certain. If it has been proved to stand for witches, then in so many houses as the branches have withered there there are witches. Afterwards they seek fresh proofs in other villages in the same way, in two or three places. Thereupon they say to the suffering person: We have ascertained these things for you; are you taking us to the guru, or is it well as it is? He will say in reply: I am not getting well; we must bring a clear decision from the guru. They fix a day and go to the witchfinder.

d. The witchfinders.

754 The witchfinders are our High-court in connexion with witchcraft. Whom they pronounce to be witches, these we call true witches. Whether they really find them, or it is false, so far as we are concerned, we believe that they really find them; they have namely received initiation from Marak buru. And we also test them, whether they speak inspired by the bongas, or they deceitfully act as witchfinders.

If a person does not become well by medicine, we first let divination be made by an ojha; thereupon we plant branches in the villages; then only we go to the witchfinder. If the whole village is ill, the village headman invites all men and takes us along; and if only one person is ill, he cries to the village headman; then a couple of men on the side of the patient, and the husband or the brothers of the person who has been found

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by the divination to be responsible, and five or six men from the village as witnesses go to the witchfinder. They stay together, in order that none of them shall be able secretly to tell the witchfinder anything. They do not go straight to the witchfinder; they camp somewhere outside. From where they are, what their names are, in whose name they have come, and what kind of illness the patient suffers from, about these matters they do not tell anybody anything. They say to the headman of the witchfinder's village: Please, Father, let us get divination in oil made at the guru's. He then asks them: How many are you, who will have offerings made? They say to him: We are so and so many men. The headman takes them to the witchfinder. The headman makes them bring forward the necessaries for offering, viz., one betel nut, one leaf-cup, sun-dried rice, oil, sindur, resin of the Sal-tree, and Bael[6] leaves.

Now the witchfinder says to them: Please come presently at this or that time. They return to their lodgings. When people of the village or anybody come there and ask them anything, they do not speak, or, even if they speak, they do not tell them their country and their village; they mention another country and another village. At the appointed time they go to the witchfinder. Sometimes the witchfinder will prophesy for them in his own house, and sometimes in the sacred grove or in the open field. They sit there quietly, and he himself puts down small quantities of sun-dried rice in many places in the name of the bongas, and puts Bael-leaves down at each place; thereupon he makes marks of sindur at each small heap of sun-dried rice, after having mixed it in oil. And the Sal-resin he throws into the fire in the earthenware lid of a vessel. He blows a conch and rings a bonga bell, and he invokes his bongas; then he becomes filled with the spirit of inspiration, and in this state he makes his utterances. First he names their country, thereupon their village, thereupon how their village street is situated, these things he mentions; thereupon their village headman, thereupon the complainant, thereupon the younger and elder brothers of his father, his brothers, his sisters, his sons, his daughters, and how many all these are, — all these he mentions by name.

Thereupon he asks them: How is it, Sirs, have I spoken these matters right or not? They then say: Absolutely right; we are convinced; please let us hear the oracle. The witchfinder answers them: Give me, pay down the fee; then naturally I shall tell you. Then they give him one rupee. And if they have come after having made an agreement, he also asks them to give as many rupees as they have agreed on; only when they give this, will he tell them whether it is a witch or a bonga, and who they are. Thereupon the witchfinder says to them: In so and so many places you have planted branches, did you do this properly or not? They answer: Yes, Father, we have done these things. Then the witchfinder says to them: If you are not satisfied, go and consult seven men of insight. If it

[6] Aegle Marmelos, Correa.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

754 turns out to be otherwise at seven such people, I shall return you your fee money. Now they go home. If it has been shown to be a bonga, the patient will promise him a sacrifice; and if it has been shown to be witches, they harrass and fine these, and they drive them ignominiously away from the village. If the people who have been pronounced to be witches at one witchfinder's are not satisfied, they take them to another witchfinder, to get fresh proof. But this is futile, because if they have been pronounced to be witches in one place, even if they go to a thousand witchfinders, they will all say the same. Only a very few witches are able by magic to muddle up a witchfinder's prophecy. If the wife of a village headman is caught as a witch, they will not be able to drive her away; she will on the contrary herself say to the person who has been eaten: Do look out for yourself, if you are not feeling comfortable somewhere; I have got a village, where shall I go?

178 754 Nowadays the witchfinders act very deceivingly; there is no trustworthiness in them as it was formerly, as with the honest witchfinders. Formerly the witchfinders did not learn to become witchfinders, it would come to them of its own accord. They were not filled by the spirit of divination; they got it at night through dreams, or they had visions in daytime. The bongas appeared and told them, viz.: Such and such people are coming for this or that purpose, you tell them in this way. Nowadays there are no such witchfinders; mostly they hypocritically blacken people and take their money. For this reason they keep secret informers, to remove hindrances. And witchfinders, who have no secret informers, make their prophecies, feeling their way. They try mentioning half a name, and keep their eyes on the persons who want to be informed, to see whether it is right or not, and if it is incorrect, they again try some other name. Therefore the words of the witchfinders do not agree nowadays. The witchfinders who keep secret informers are easily able to find all out; if such a witchfinder is unable to name it correctly, he says to them: Sirs, there is an occult hindrance; get this removed first. They then go to the secret informer. What different things have to be given to remove the occult hindrance, this the witchfinder has told them. The secret informer offers this, a fowl, or a grasshopper, or a frog, or some fungus, or a white cat. Before he performs the sacrifice, he asks them: In whose name am I to get the occult hindrance removed? Then they tell him the names of the village headman and of his deputy; they tell him the name of the complainant; and as they tell him a few other matters, he performs the sacrifice. Thereupon he says to them: If you have any doubt, watch me; I shall not go to the witchfinder. But to his own house he goes, and his wife can talk with the wife of the witchfinder; thereby much deceit may happen. Let the witchfinders at once openly tell all as in former times, in that case there is nothing to be said. But where do the present day witchfinders act in this way? The secret informers get one four-anna bit to remove the occult hindrance.

178 787 he possessed as Mañjhi haṛam. Thereupon I quickly become possessed, and they ask me: Who are you, Lord? Then I tell: Mañjhi haṛam. Then they take me to their house; at the door they wash my feet on a brass plate. Thereupon they take me inside and make me sit down on a stool. Then they bring me some very tasty poured out beer in a brass-cup. When I have drunk about two brass-cups, I come to. In many villages I have fraudulently obtained beer by becoming possessed in this way.

When they tie the bullocks to the posts in the street at the Sohrae and forget any customary act, I look intently at it, in order that when they ask me, after my having become possessed, I may be able to tell exactly why I, the Mañjhi haṛam, have come. Having become possessed I say to them: I have come because you have done wrong in connexion with this or that. Then they say to me: Well, my Lord, don't be offended; we did something wrong; please put up with it, endure it. Then they again give me one additional brass-cup full of beer.

f. Application of the (evil) eye.

754 Application of the eye is also a trouble that we have. The eye of women is applied because of envy. When they see that someone has earned well, they say: Nothing happens to so and so; they are earning exceedingly; they will surely have no trouble. This speech of theirs takes effect. Then these people become ill; their cattle die, and they get much suffering. When they let divination be made in connexion with this the ojhas say: Envy and malevolence have been applied to you. Consequently they give fowls to the ojha, that he may make them well by sacrificing them. Therefore, however wise we Santals may be, or however much we may be able to work, we do not exert ourselves too much; we rather suffer hunger.

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g. Of being bewitched.

754 We are also afraid of being bewitched. People say, it is told, if people whose tongue is spotted look at you when you are eating, you will vomit a good deal, afterwards you will get diarrhoea, and in case it is a child, they will also cry much. On such occasions we let persons who know how to do it, feel the pulse. They will then say: This one has been bewitched, get me some marking nut, one half of the pod of the fruit of jom lar[9], some charcoal and a straw of a worn broom. They bring him this, and keeping his breath he three times makes exorcizing passes over the bewitched person, and when he is performing this, he takes these things below and under his legs; thereupon he throws it all away on to the homestead field of some other person.

[9] Bauhinia Vahli, W. & A.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

h. About digging out bongas.

To dig out bongas is also a work we have. We make the ojhas dig, if it has been proved that a bonga has been buried. Witches deposit (bury) bongas in the house or cowshed of some person, in order that these people may die. On such occasions we fetch an ojha, that is to say one who knows how to dig out bongas. Not all ojhas know this. The ojhas first make divination, to find out where the buried bongas are. When they have ascertained this, they dig out the bongas. We have seen bongas that have been dug out. Deposited bongas are of two kinds. One kind of bongs is a white stone to which sindur has been applied, covered by hair wrapped round it, and another kind of bonga is all kinds of agricultural seeds and a white stone with sindur applied to it, put into an empty cocoon. When the bongs has been dug out, the diseased persons sometimes get well, sometimes they also get worse thereby. When they dig out bongas, sacrifices have to be given, one ram, one pig, one goat, five fowls and one pair of pigeons. The ojha gets for the offering of his blood five four-anna bits in money, and when the diseased person gets quite well, the ojha at the same time next year gets five rupees and a loin-cloth. 754 755

i. The bonga of the old home of a wife.

If the bonga of the old home of a wife follows her, they will get well only when he is taken back there; otherwise they are taken ill and they die. If they sacrifice every year to a bonga of the wife's old home, who has followed to the son-in-law's home, he will not eat them; if they do not sacrifice to him, they will have to give various things to make him go back. As much as they have brought from the house of the bride's father, only when they send all this back, will the bonga of the wife's old home leave them, and they will also have to take along to the home of the bride's father two animals to be sacrificed. They call the bonga of a wife's old home **acraole bonga**. If the bongas of the wife's old home become angry, they eat awfully; therefore people make sacrifices to them from fear; or they send them quickly back. 755 776

j. About exorcising bongas.

When bongas are exorcized, a good many requisites in connexion therewith have to be given, otherwise they do not go out. They exorcize the wealth-bongas. The wealth-bongas make them who have taken them in, very wealthy; but if they become obstinately angry, they eat people in large numbers. Therefore people are saved only when they exorcize them; otherwise they will eradicate the whole family.

If they get proofs through ojhas or witchfinders, that the wealth-bongas are eating, they procure the requisites: one silk cloth, one small box with sindur, a hair-knot tassel, a plait of cow-tail hair, a hair-pin, a small box with eye-paint, a winnowing-fan, a small

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Hill-Spirit hast thou come here?, To what order (of spirits) dost thou belong?. Answer questions. Then, O deity! we shall spread a wooden-seat (or stone-seat) for thee."

The men in trance reply:—"Hinsaha (very well I am answering)."

Next follows an answer giving the name of the *Orak' Bonga*. The householder then prays, "So and so is ill ; he is being treated by so and so. Do please help the doctor to cure the disease. If the patient recovers, I shall offer you this (fowls, rams or goats)".

The men in trance now give appropriate answers, as to what god to propitiate, with what offerings and when, or may suggest other ways and means to get rid of the calamity.

This prayer is offered at the door of the room (Bhitar duar), which is considered holy as the abode of the household deity. This room is not open to strangers, and even members of the house can enter this only after a ceremonial purification. If the disease is serious, villagers are called, and *Jhupar* takes place to find out the appropriate remedy.

Belief in Evil Eye

Like the other aboriginal tribes of the Central Belt, the Santals believe in women possessing a malevolent eye, that can bring ruin on people by

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754 [822] their baleful influence. Similarly, some men are supposed to possess "evil shadows," so much so, that even if snakes fall within their ambit, they cannot move an inch. When a child vomits, has [753] bowel complaints or fever, or cries unnecessarily, it is the evil eye that is thought to be responsible for [822] the malady. Let a man's evil shadow fall on rice-[213] beer, lo and behold! it does no more ferment.

789 754 To prevent these, Santal children are made to wear amulets of parasites on *Bhela* trees. Incantations are also uttered over some mustard seeds, a few grains of which are wrapped up in a piece of cloth and worn as a charm held by a string round the loins or the neck. In serious cases, the *Ojha* [756] (exorcist) is summoned when he chants incantations and removes the spell.

Magical charms to counteract spells are learnt by many Santals, for, who knows that 'evil eyes' may not lead them to embarrassing situations at village dances, when they may find their wearing cloth being stolen away by invisible hands? And [756] in ceremonies like marriages, the services of an exorcist are sometimes requisitioned to patrol over women with evil eyes or men with evil shadows.

Apart from these, there are various other beliefs regarding the capacity of certain men to cast magical [578] spells. Thus if an inimical person buries anything near a Santal's house, it is thought that an injury is intended.

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is intended. An exorcist is called in, who chants an incantation and allows his stick to strike all over the place. It is an unseen hand which guides him to the spot where the thing was buried. Soon they dig the place and unearth the uncanny deposit made by a malignant enemy, thus counteracting the spell cast. A peculiar instance of this nature is that when a man's cow yields a very large quantity of milk, a jealous enemy may bury milk itself, with the unholy hope that the process will diminish the supply. Similarly, if it is intended to bring harm to a man's harvest, rice is buried, and if a man's death is intended, a bone may be deposited in the earth.

Luck

Belief in luck is nothing special to the Santal. He has it in common with all the Munḍà tribes and the semi-Hinduised people of the Central Belt, not to speak of the caste-Hindus, many of whose superstitions have a similar flavour.

The Santals credit some persons with possessing "the luck of the threshing-floor." Those who are thus blest gather more harvest than others, and when they thresh the paddy, more of grains and less of chaff come out. This gift, however, can be 'stolen' by malignant persons and there are special methods of approaching such problems.

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777 352 Luck attached to a bed is tested in a peculiar way. The interstices between a stringed bed (*khatia*) are counted from its top to bottom, beginning with *ind*, then *cand*, then *jom*, and then *raja*, and so on till the end. If either *raja* or *cand* falls on the last space, the bed is lucky, and if either *ind* or *jom* falls on it, the bed is unlucky.

777 243 825 301 [823] In sowing millets, the luck of preserving the grains from the attack of pests is ensured in a special way. The sower wears a ring made from the scale of the *Harba* (Indian scaly ant-eater). This ring must be cut by a flint to protect its virtue; and should iron be used, it loses all its powers.[1]

Origin of Witch-Craft

754 562 That the Santals have an uncanny faith in Witch-craft is known to many, but little is known about the fact that they consider all women as potential witches, who learnt their art, or rather stole it from Marañ Buru, the chief presiding deity, and how men in return learnt the craft of detecting the witches among women.

754 According to the sayings of the Santal patriarchs as we read in *Hòṛkorèn Mare Hapramko Reak'*

1 Dr. Campbell's *Santali to English Dictionary*, pages 22 and 265.

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Katha, the Witches are the thorns of the Santal social-fabric. They cause unhappiness among relatives leading not unoften to separation and murders. Questioned about Witch-craft a Santal would say, "Magistrates undoubtedly try cases, but the ideas of Witch-craft do not enter their heads. If we punish Witches, they complain against us and we get the sentence ourselves. The problem is very difficult. And when we explain to the *Hakim* (magistrate), he argues thus, "If the woman over there is really a Witch, let her eat my fingers. Then I shall believe your statement." But the trouble is that the witches do not kill men with such weapons as swords, but by the exercise of a certain hypnotic spell. But, they would argue, it was otherwise in ancient times when the Headman and his assistants used to chastise the witches and drive them out of the Santal villages. But now, they get full indulgence from Magistrates and the Witches are not punished as they deserve".

How do the Witches exercise their spell

The Witches, according to the sayings of the patriarchs, masquerade in the guise of women at day-time. At night-fall, they leave the beds of their husbands and put broom-sticks in their places. Thus they exercise a spell on their husbands and relatives into believing that they are sleeping. Then

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754 they assemble in a forest or field, all travelling on trees which are their vehicles by night. Here, [776] naked except for the bristles of a broom-stick, they sing and dance for the whole night with *Boṅgas* (spirit deities) and lions as their partners. It is said that they like very much to pat the manes of the lions and comb them. And they beguile the *Boṅgas* so that they may not help the Witch-doctors to know their real names. They then return before morning to their respective homes and take up human shapes.

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A Witch Tradition

To illustrate the theory of witches two very realistic stories are told in the *Hóṛkorèn Mare Hapramko Reak' Katha*. One of them states that in olden times, the witches of a certain place used to secure the services of two Santal lads to play on kettle-drums during their nocturnal revelries. Once, they took out the lungs of another young man and had a picnic after cooking them with rice, salt and turmeric. The young men were not denied their share, but they stealthily pocketed their portion of the monstrous dish, while the party was carousing in drinks of home-made beer, *hàṇḍia*. When, however, they returned home the next morning, they found that the victim out of whom the lungs were taken out, had fallen seriously ill. People

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were perplexed to think about the reason of his illness, when the two kettledrum players of the night before, could stand the secret no longer, and gave out the whole story out of pity for the young sufferer, advising the villagers to arrest the two women, who were no other than the Headman's and the Assistant Headman's (*Paranik*) wives.

The women. when summoned, furiously denied the charge of being witches. Their husbands, who were powerful village officials, became very indignant at the allegations of the two young men and they thundered, "Prove your charges or you will suffer terrible consequences." Undaunted the young men produced their share of roasted human lungs as exhibits. Then the *Parganait* (the tribal police chief) appeared on the scene and asked for a 'Kapi' (short sword) and pointing it to the two women threatened to kill them unless they cured the victim. Then out of fear, the witches cured him. In citing the above instance, it is shown how very difficult it is to detect witches when they pass under the patronage of high village officials as their wives.

The second story reads thus:—

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Long, long ago an *Ojha* (witch-doctor) accused the wives of the village Mañjhi and the Paranik to be witches. Naturally, the husbands of the two

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754 756 539 women became incensed, and threatened the *Ojha* with death if he could not prove his charges. The *Ojha* said that he would prove his allegation one day.

Then the Witch-doctor took his bow and arrow and went to the *Jabèrthan* (the Holy Grove in the village) after eating his evening meal and climbed a a tree. The accused witches arrived there at about 10 p.m. and began to dance and shake their heads in a frenzy. The witches very soon called a lion by the name of Lukhu, and as they whistled, one more lion arrived. They became very friendly with the lions and began to pat their manes and comb them. Then the Witch-doctor shot at the bigger of the two lions and thinking that the witches had struck them from behind, the injured lion turned to the women and killed them. Very soon, the other lion was also shot down from the tree by the Witch-doctor, who returned home.

The next morning, the witches were missed from their beds by their husbands. The story reaching the ears of the Witch-doctor, he advised the search-party to proceed towards the *Jabèrthan*, as he had seen them going to that direction. And, they were found dead there with the lions. When the Witch-doctor told his story, a wave of sensation ran through the village, and say the Patriarchs, "Thenceforth we are strong believers in Witch-craft."

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How Witch-craft began among the Santals

The hoary sages of antiquity amongst the Santals say that Marañ Buru, the chief presiding deity, wanted to teach the craft to men to arm them with powers of properly subduing women, but the latter learnt it by trickery.

It arose in this interesting way:—

One day, men assembled together and discussed how best to keep women under subjection. They complained amongst themselves that although they were men, their commands were flouted. Women got angry when any advice was offered to them. Such things were unbearable. They at last decided to approach Marañ Buru to teach them some art to exercise proper control over women. The deputationists arrived before the gates of Marañ Buru one midnight, and prayed for an interview. Their request was complied with, and the men explained all their troubles with their wives and sought for the remedy. Marañ Buru agreed to teach them the art provided they marked some leaves with their blood. They were a bit frightened at the proposition, and said that they would come the next day and learn the craft.

Meanwhile, the wives of the men had followed the deputationists and overheard everything. And they said among themselves, "Men are really

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539 wicked and selfish. When we are young and before our marriage, men flatter us, but when we grow old they want to get rid of us." Hurriedly the women returned home, and welcomed their respective husbands very cordially, and were very sweet to them. The men were charmed by their behaviour and thought further deputations to Marañ Buru useless, as they had come round.

The next day, the women fed their husbands sumptuously and plied them with liberal drinks. The men became drunk and slept like logs. Then the women put on the disguise of men with *dhotis*, turbans and beards of goat's hair, and on they went to Marañ Buru and prayed for the antidote as they were disgusted with their wives. The soft-hearted deity agreed and asked the men to put special marks with blood on a *sal*-leaf as they use in signing documents, and taught them the *Tantra* (*jharni*) and the *mantra* relating to witch-craft and thus qualified them to kill human beings with their spell. The women now returned home with glad hearts.

The next day, the husbands found themselves faced with volleys of abuses from their termagant wives. They realised that their lives were as miserable as before, and pathetically enough, they decided to go to Marañ Buru to learn the craft, whatever his conditions might be. But when they reached his place, the puzzled husbands learnt that a batch of

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men passing under their names had learnt the art. They furiously denied that they had come overnight and were the more perplexed to see their special signatures on *sal*-leaves. "The marks are ours but they are forged," they protested..... All could easily guess who had tricked them thus. Maran Burn in his anger said, "The women cheated me too as if I were a child. Put your own marks, I shall see these women."..... Then the deity taught them the craft of the Witch-doctor as a counteracting factor to the Witch-craft learnt by women.

So it is, the early fathers of the Santals say, that there has been going on a ceaseless war between the Witches and the Witch-doctors known as *Ojhas* and *Jan gurus*. But in the tussle, the exorcists are frequently worsted because the witches ally themselves with the *Boŋgas* (evil-spirits) by bribing them with all the sweets of life. It is no wonder therefore that wrong persons are sometimes mentioned in the Witch-doctor's "Tel-pat" (*a sal*-leaf, moistened with oil), where the real self of the Witch ought to be reflected, and innocent persons are named therein by the witches in collusion with the evil-spirits.

The Santal traditions say that Witch-craft and the cult of the Witch-doctor are attributed by some to 'Kamru-Guru' i.e. people versed in the arts at Kamrup, whose disciples the early Santals became.

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Different Grades of Witches[1]

754 554 Whatever the traditions behind Witch-craft may be, the present-day Santal in Mayurbhanj believes that there are mainly two classes of witches, viz. *Dàn* and *Nañjòm*. The *Nañjòm* are the higher class amongst *Dàns*. When a *Nañjòm* becomes very expert and has all the *Dàn Boñgas* under her control, she is then called a *Nañjòm*. She then walks with her hands, and her legs are stretched upwards. Her [756] witchery is said to be very powerful and it is said, no ordinary *Ojha* (witch-doctor) can overcome her. The *Dáns* generally come out at night and take with them tigers which they call dogs (*Bhàtu*). Along with the so-called dogs, they roam about in troops in a naked condition. They worship their witch-gods and practise *mantras* (charms) learnt from their *gurus* (teachers). By exercising the charm of these *mantras*, secretly and repeatedly amongst human beings and domestic animals, they cause illness and sometimes bring death to them.

754 ### *Is Witch-Craft Inborn?*

The Santals say that the power of Witch-craft is not inborn but always acquired by training. The

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[115] 1 The materials of this and the following sub-section were supplied by Messrs. Ananta Mañjhi and Samra Ch. Mañjhi of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj.

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witch loves her witchery so much that she is ever anxious to teach her craft to her obedient pupils. So when a witch chances to meet such a suitable girl at a lonely place, she sings some songs. These are so entrancing that the girl longs to learn them. But when the girl receives the lesson, some *Boŋgas* appear to her in a dream and ask her to worship them. If she refuses, they threaten her in various ways. Then the girl goes to the witch who taught her the song, and seeks her advice, and thereafter becomes a *chela* (learner). She is then carried to the place of the *Boŋgas* on a dark night and forced to be a real obedient *chela*, when she is taught the *mantras* and the Witch-craft. This is generally done at night in solitary places. It is said that these *mantras*, when fairly learnt, act like an unbalancing infusion and the learners lose their real selves and become as mad as one may be. A person in that condition is said to be in "rumu" in Mayurbhanj. The *Guru* restores them to their senses again by the power of his *mantras*. When the process is repeated for several days, the pupils get used to the spell and learn Witch-craft perfectly.

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The period of training thus over, all the *Dàns* now ask the pupil to practise her witchery upon any one of her nearest and dearest relatives. If she is unwilling to do so, she becomes "Kunki" (mad) and dies. If she agrees, it is seen that as the result

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754 of her witchery some one of her dear relatives has fallen ill. Death comes very soon. Then, when the dead person is buried, the witch and the pupil go to the place at night along with other witches. Next, they bring out the dead body and give life back to it with the help of their *mantras*. The body is then washed and besmeared with turmeric paste and oil. Thereafter, the pupil utters other *mantras*, on which the liver of the man comes out of the body and falls on the ground. The witches take up the liver, and all of them eat a bit of it. Now the man dies really and no witch can make him return to life any more. Then they bury the dead body in its place and return home.

Some say that the witches take out the liver of the man at the time of his illness and when they eat it up, he dies. Thus when the witchery of the pupil is successful, her training is completed and she becomes a *Dàn*. It is said that both a boy and a girl can receive training in Witch-craft, in case they are willing and have a *Dàn* to teach them the craft.

Ojha (Witch-Doctor)

756 754 Though the traditions narrated in the previous pages are myths, the fact remains that the cult of the witch-doctor is an inseparable part of the Santal social fabric. Witches are there hidden in the

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personalities of even mothers, wives, sisters and daughters; so the witch-doctor flourishes to relieve the society of its canker. The witch-doctor finds out the evil deities (*Boṅgas*) who create disturbance in the village. They trace witches among men and women. It is he only who can say if the household deity (*Oṛak' Boṅga*) or *Jahèr era* (a female deity of the Holy Grove) is angry with anybody and needs propitiation.

In course of our enquiries in Mayurbhanj rural areas, Mr. Ananta Mañjhi, a Sub-Inspector of Police of Kaptipada described to us in detail the *modus operandi* of witch-doctors.

He said that whenever a man comes to a witch-doctor to complain of some disturbance in his household, the *Ojha* at first performs some worship by keeping a water-pot, *Tursi* leaves and a piece of copper in his presence. Then he takes a cane stick, smells it together with the aforesaid articles, and throws some rice in the water-pot. Thereafter, in a trance he begins to mention the names of the father, number of children, numbers of huts and doors to locate the evil. When all these are answered in the affirmative, the evil deity who created the disturbance is named; and the offerings suitable for its propitiation are mentioned. And if it be that a witch is responsible for the trouble, the person under whose cover she

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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755 756 [754] passes in the society is mentioned. To discover witches and *Boŋgas* some witch-doctors use *sal*-leaves moistened with oil and vermilion, some ring a bell, while others merely blow a conch-shell. He also gave us an account of an *Ojha* he had seen, who could, without performing any ritual, exactly say everything in detail by sitting glum after a period of moody meditation. After this, he would give elaborate instructions as to how to remove the evil spirit.

754 [115] "Witches flit about with a light like the willo' the wisp," said Mr. Sundar Mohan Mañjhi, a college student of Bamanghati, Mayurbhanj. He said, "On a new moon night my brother went to a tank alone with a torch-light with him. There he met a co-villager, and to their surprise, both of them noticed one or two lights moving away. Soon after all was dark, the lights had vanished. They tried to focus the torch-light on the place where the light was last seen. But to their horror the lights appeared again and began to run towards them. On the previous day my brother had got an itching sensation on his finger. But after the aforesaid incident, a boil appeared giving unusually excruciating pain, and his palm began to swell. The pain was incessant: all sorts of medical aid were tried but to no effect. Then, after a day he disclosed the matter and the connected incident to the people.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Next an *Ojha* (a weaver by caste) was called in and consulted at his home, the patient giving no hints of the previous history. To their surprise, the *Ojha* himself detailed the incident, diagnosing the disease to be due to the evil eye of a witch. Naturally, the *Ojha* was requested to remove the same. The *Ojha* was supplied with vermilion, sun-dried rice, some grass (*Kaṭkòm carèc'*. A common grass, Rottboellia perforata, *Roxb.*) and two chickens. Then with some charcoal and brick powder he drew some figures on the floor and began to chant incantations to deities with appropriate offerings. Next, he took the materials to a distant place and made similar figures there also. He invited his gods and goddesses, offered them vermilion, rice, a piece of copper and a wick soaked in *ghee*. He then began to run hither and thither after marking himself with vermilion on his forehead, arms, breast and thighs. He ran thorns on some parts of his body, and offered a few drops of blood to his deity. It was found that after the removal of the witch responsible by the witch-doctor, the patient felt relieved, and from the following day the swelling subsided. Then, after a very simple treatment, the boil was healed.

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Questioned about *Ojhas*, Fagu Mañjhi, Desh pródhan of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, said: "People go to *Jan-ojhas* if there is any disease in the family either contagious or of a serious nature.

755 [115]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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791 and is then called a "Jan-Guru". As regards
776 the second method, it is stated that there are several
[787] *Guru Boṅgas*. The man who is devoted to them and has faith on them sees them coming to him in dreams. He then knows that the *Boṅgas* are pleased
[782] with him and want his worship. If the pupil likes it, he offers vermilion and *dhup* (incense) in the names of the *Boṅgas*, he saw in his dream. The *Boṅgas* again appear before him in dreams and tell him of their powers and ask him to worship them. With the series of *Boṅgas* thus appearing before him, the pupil becomes *Koñka* (puzzled). He then goes to the *Boṅgathans* (the places where the *Boṅgas* live) and remains there for some days. He talks with the spirits and they assure him that whenever he remembers them, they will be at his beck and call and tell him whatever he wants to know. Thus getting his boon, the pupil returns home and continues to worship the *Boṅgas* and practise his power.

Conclusion

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755 Magic and witch-craft are an essential part of
789 the belief of most of the Hinduised tribes and the
[171] pre-Dravidian people resident in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Although it cannot be vouched for a
[177] certainty as to whether the Santals borrowed it
[174] wholesale from the Hindus, there is some internal

3t Mukherjea O. Y 4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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evidence showing the influence of Hindu ideas on Santal magical practices. In the race of life, the Santal finds inexplicable super-normal phenomena. He does not know how to react to the unknown and unknowable; so he has recourse to magic to deal with the impersonal forces and energies through appropriate rites and spells. This is done not by all the Santals, but only by the *Ojha*, a specialist in the art of magic and witch-craft. And he is generally the common doctor for all the Hinduised tribes and the Muṇḍà people. What the witch-doctor does is to practise the art of dissociating himself with the aim of spirit-communication, when he chants some magic formulae and makes the patent gestures while he performs the time-honoured rites to conjure the spirits. All these he does with the aid of some spirits, and although his mission is like the priest of religion to attain curative results that endure to the benefit of Santals individually or the tribe taken as a whole, it cannot be said that anti-social results do not follow due to the activities of some malignant *Ojhas* out to wreak personal vengeance on their enemies with the aid of malevolent spirits.

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776 538 588 inhabiting a spring, cast a spell on a Santal youth on whom she had taken a fancy. The boy found himself spirited away into a pool, where he found dry land and many houses. There he lived with the girl for a long time, forgetting everything of this earth, in merry chases with tigers as hunting-dogs, (*Gutrut seta*, as called by Mayurbhanj Santals).

The special vision, thus obtained, helped him to see how there were crowds of *Boṅgas* living in villages like men. He had the strange knowledge that in December, when Santals thresh rice, the *Boṅgas* carry off half of it.

776 539 But the saving grace of the whole situation is that these thieves can be detected by human beings. Thus we learn of a Boundary *Boṅga* being overheard by a Santal, while maturing a plan of theft with his wife. The *Boṅga* was thus baulked of his impious intentions by the farmer, who harvested his corn during the temporary absence of the godling, taking care to sacrifice a pig and offering a plate of flour to his might-have-been spoiler.

• 754 *Witch-Craft Stories*

From the several stories relating to witch-craft, we gather that the Santal women learnt the art from Marah Buru and how they decoy little girls and teach them the craft, so that it may not die out.

This initiation has its weird aspect. For we see,

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on being abducted by force, these little pupils are made to command tigers so that they (pupils) may lose all fear. The next stage is reached when the students are led to the most powerful *Boṅgas* and are trained how to pray for their uncanny gifts and to become possessed. Thus emerges from the school, the full-fledged witch, holding a light in her hand and flourishing a broom tied round her waist. She is now formally married to a *Boṅga*, although, she may have a second husband in the person of a man in the social sense.

The curriculum thus completed, the witch is now awarded her degree (*Sid atang*) by pulling out a man's liver and eating it with her trainer. Should she refuse this cannibalistic meal, she will turn lunatic or meet with her death.

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From the dozen stories in Mr. Bompas' collection, we learn that there are men also who learn the craft, and we read the strange protest of a man, who, after initiation into witch-craft, refused to eat a human being, because he was an orphan and had no relations to eat. The Santal social fabric is thus full of witches who marry men in disguise and merrily meet together at night to devise plans how to eat their kith and kin. And when they leave the beds of their Santal husbands to meet their *Boṅga* lovers, they keep behind a *Boṅga*-woman as a substitute-wife. But, it may be that the man

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754 538 [796] may become suspicious and brand the partner of his bed with red-hot fuel. Then it is for the *Boŋga* to fly away "in a flame of fire." Thus they masquerade in the garb of wives and dear relations, and if at all, are discovered by accident. We read in the story "Two Witches" how one Chandrai discovered the plan of a woman and her mother-in-law, both witches, to eat up the husband of the former, while causing the witch-doctors to see the faces of two other innocent women as casting the spell, in the oiled *sal-leaf*. "The old woman took up a hatchet and went to where her son was digging the hole. She waited till he bent down to throw the earth with his hands and then cut open his back and pulled out the liver and heart and brought them into the house. Her unfortunate son felt a spasm when his mother struck him but he did not know what had hurt him and there was no visible wound."*

796 538 Similarly, in "*The Sarsagun Maiden*", we see how a Santal bride was spirited away by a *Boŋga* youth and kept captive till she was rescued by the chivalrous bridegroom.

Even school boys are not spared the amorous attentions of Boŋgas. We are treated to the story of such an abducted pupil with his slate and books,

* P. 433, *Folk-tales of the Santal Parganas*, Bompas.

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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776 Again we hear how "The Sister-in-law who
538 was a Witch" requisitioned the services of an
754 immense bearded *Boṅga*, with long matted hair, to kill her brother-in-law by setting on a tiger for the offence that he, in a playful teasing mood, was delaying the eating of the dinner she had brought to the field.

Witches can be, however, very useful devils. If detected and cornered, they can be of immense service to men. This we see in the story of Ramjit *Boṅga*, where a witch, on her secret being out, promised to be the tribal *Ojha* and cure the diseases of the Santals. Once a witch, always a witch: the man who has once learnt it cannot at any time forget the craft.

538 *Fondness for Verbal Quibbles and Metaphors*

Any one reading the folk-tales of the Santals cannot but be struck with the love the tribe displays for speaking in enigmatic riddles and metaphors. We consider it worth-while to devote special attention to this feature.

539 In the "Fool and his dinner" we see how a Santal asked his mother-in-law about the recipe of a dish he was offered at dinner and was told, "I have cooked that which is behind you." The fool stole the door, and tried to cook it, but all that his mother-in-law meant was that she had cooked shoots of bamboo. Failure to understand such quibbles

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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771 782 796 Thus in religion proper the main attitude of Santal Society towards the supernatural, is one of reverential fear in the presence of certain mysterious supernatural powers and beings and dependence on and propitiation to and prayerful submission to them, and the result expected is the averting of the ill-will and securing the good will of the supernatural beings and good luck to man in crops and cattle, health and progeny.

771 796 769 782 [784] The Santal religion is also not a little concerned with ancestral and certain other disembodied souls and Nature-spirits and deities. The rites employed to establish relations with them are mainly supplications and prayers, offerings of sacrifices and the ceremonial sharing of sacrificial food besides certain special observances and taboos.

771 [754] [796] The Santal believe that the supernatural influence is not often inimical and evil. Their idea is that there is no possibility of malevolent influence being turned to a benevolent or good one, the only practical question for them is how to stop it and, in the case of witches, how to stop and punish it. Bongas and witches know how to do evil to people but more often than not also how to do them good.

771 829 [182] The Santal religion in its social aspect is essentially a tribal matter and has helped to strengthen the social unity and quicken the sense of social responsibility, and his concept of righteousness is bound up with his social or tribal consciousness. As the Santal Society has not yet got much beyond a limited tribal consciousness his conception of righteousness is not concerned with the essential or absolute standard of righteousness of things.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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knowledge of herbs as well as the mysterious processes of evil caused by malevolent natural or human agencies and profess to cure the Santal of his daily ailments and afflictions. Thus magic ritualism is the speciality of Santal society and centre of the individual's life, whereas the religious ceremonials are more or less communal group affairs. The complicated cross section of the Santal belief would be well studied in the functional differentiation of the communal priest, the Ato naeke, his assistant, Kudam naeke, and Dehri (hunt-priest), the herbalist medicine-man, the Bonga-doctor or Ojha and the witch-detector on Jan-guru.

Different types of religious functionaires, medicine-man, etc.

Amongst the Santals working in the Daminiko area where they are closely concentrated, it was curious to notice many functionaries named as Ojha, Janguru, Kamruguru, Raranic, Ato-Naike, Kudam Naike and Dehri. The Santal carefully draws a distinction between the officers of his social ceremonials, the high priests of the community and the specialists who may be described in modern terms as the practising physicians and the mental disease experts, the last of course not being psychopathists but masters of spiritualist seances. The sorcerer who practises evil eye and witchcraft is also sharply distinguished.

Studying the other allied tribes nearby we find mostly a distinction between the social functionary in charge of religious festivals sharply distinguished from the spirit-doctor generally possessing second sight. The term for the priest is Naya amongst the Birhors and Pahan amongst the Mundas and Oraons. The word Naya as also Naike may have some connection with the

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Hindi word Nayak or leader, a term often used in the old Hindu army for lieutenants. Rai Bahadur Roy shows the Birhor Naya in a plate as Raja or chief[1]. Similarly, the word Pahan may be equated with the Hindi Pradhan or chief. These indicate the power of the religious functionary in the state. It cannot be said, at least from the study of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as well as those of Assam, that the medicine-man developed into the king, for in both the areas we find the temporal chief superior in authority to the ecclesiatic functionary. But the terms themselves show that the religious functionary is given a considerable recognition in temporal status. It is possible Hindu missionaries in bygone days might have exercised temporal and spiritual authority from which these tribes again recovered, re-establishing their own indigenous superiority of their secular chief or headman.

The term for the spirit-doctor with second sight is Mati among most of the primitive tribes of Chota-Nagpur. The Mundas, the Birhors and the Oraons all call their spirit-doctor Mati, the Hos of Seraikella call him Ojha[2]. The Santal term Ojha has rightly been objected to by Rev. P.O. Bodding as a Hindi loan word derived from Upadhyaya[3]. But we think he goes too far when he says that the whole system of Ojhaism is derived from the Hindus. Similar practices in Hindu society may be sometimes detected in the lowest stratum and also under even the mystic Tantric ritual. They

[1] S.C. Roy's The Birhor, p. 340, Plate XXVIII.
[2] A Chatterjee and T. Das, Hos. of Seraikella, part I p. 38.
[3] Rev. P.O. Bodding, Studies in Santal disease and Connected Folklore, part I.

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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ghost or demon. Dr. Clements has drawn rightly a distinction between a spirit intrusion and spirit possession.[1] Amongst the Santals the most respected person would be the Ojha who would work for good, being 'possessed' by a spirit. Whereas all the evils and sorceries are due in their belief to the intrusion of the bongas, often worked to that effect by that most hated and feared human set, the dains or witches. It is further curious to observe how the concepts of sorcery, breach of taboo, and bonga-intrusion have become closely interwoven with each other in Santal thought. The spirit or bonga-intrusion is generally aided by the human agency of the sorceress—but the witch of the intruding malevolent bonga would be powerless to offend unless the victim had committed some breach of taboo. The witch-doctor who is called in aid of the diseased, first of all enquiries[2] carefully about the conduct of the patient so as to find out the nature of the breach of the taboo which has enabled the evil bonga to intrude and then with the help of expiatory rites and superior spirit-aid he drives away the intruding evil bonga.

Spirit intrusion, according to Dr. Clements, is probably considerably later than disease-object intrusion and had undergone considerable diffusion before the full Neolithic period of Western Asia. Clements has further shown that belief in disease causing sorcery is distributed to the ends of the earth. It is of almost universal occurrence in the Old World and extends from the north to the south even in the New World. The basic idea has been suggested to be possibly due to the "Elementargedanken" of Bastian.

[1] Dr. Clements, op. cit., pp. 216-225.

2 [Erratum: this should read "enquires." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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754 171 The mechanism of sorcery in the area is either by magic as amongst the Andamanese or by shooting a magic bow or 'ban' into the victim or extracting some internal parts of the victim as amongst the Australians.

754 Sorcery in the Santal area, according to Bompass, is practised by forms of magic as amongst the Andamanese.[1] The District Gazetteer records how the witches draw the picture of a person to be harmed and the image is then maltreated or symbolically killed by the process of imitative magic. They also would bury tufts of hair with vermilion or sindur which being in contact with the victim's body are subjected to a process of contagious magic and the victim is expected to fall ill.[2]

Similarly, on the authority of Bompass, we know that supernatural agencies or malevolent bongas are directed by witches to kill a man on a certain day, or the witches bring about misfortune on other men by ordering their bonga husband to do so and nagging them on till they commit mischief. Amongst the Birhors, Rai Bahadur Roy records how the familiar spirit is directed towards the victim's house towards which the witch throws some rice. The Oraon modus operandi of witchery as recorded so fully by Rai Bahadur Roy brings this area more in line with Australian practices. The employment of the magic arrow or 'ban' is a belief widely distributed in North Eastern India. The magical extraction of the victim's vital organs which among the Australians is the kidney fat, is amongst the

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[1]Bompass, Folklore of the Santal Parganas, p. 429.
[2]Bengal District Gazetteer Santal Parganas, p. 123.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Oraons believed to be the heart, whilst amongst the Santals it is supposed to be the liver as our informant told us. Bompass also records an incident where a witch was surprised while extracting the liver from a body in order to eat it.[1] 754 171

Witchery through the evil eye is a belief rampant not only amongst the Santals but amongst other more cultured people of North-East India. It is also found amongst the Birhors, Hos and Oraons.

It is curious to observe how, though the Oraons have both male and female wizards and witches, the Santals ascribe this evil only to women. Their tradition, as recorded by Bompass, fully brings it out : 754 462 539

"Once upon a time Marang Buru (principal diety) decided that he would teach men witchcraft. In those days there was a place at which men used to assemble to meet Marang Buru and hold council with him, but they only heard his voice and never saw his face. One day at the assembly when they met Marang Buru he told them to come to him in their best and cleanest clothes for he would teach them witchcraft. All then went home and told their wives to wash their clothes well against the fixed day as they were going to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft. All the women made a plot to learn it by making their husbands drunk on the appointed day and they then wearing the dress of the males went off to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft in place of their husbands. They then went to Marang

[1]C.H. Bompass, pp. cit., p. 421.
[2]C.H.Bompass, op. cit., p. 422.

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Buru but Marang Buru did not detect the imposture and taught them witchcraft. After their return however their husbands came back to their senses and they at once went to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft. Marang Buru said "I taught it all to you this morning, what makes you come again." They were astonished at this and protested that they had not been to him at all that morning. Marang Buru said, 'Then you must have told your wives what I forbade you.' They gave an answer in the affirmative. Marang Buru then taught the science of *Ojhaism* and *Jan* in order that they might have some advantage over their wives, and be able to overawe them. This is why only women are witches and men are Ojhas and *Jan-guru*."

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Women, who are witches, of several neighbouring villages meet under some trees in a secluded place at some distance from human habitation generally on a Sunday at dead of night of a new moon. There, it is said, they strip themselves of their clothes and wear only the fringes of old brooms made of wild grass suspended from a girdle round their waists. Thus arranged the naked women hold the witches' dance. They have their peculiar secret songs and mantras, perform sacrifices and also try to kill people by magic very much in the same way as the old witches of Europe. It is particularly on the night of *Amawasa* (new moon), in the month of Kartic (October-November) that these witches' dances are celebrated with special eclat. Large companies of witches, it is said, move about that night and people are afraid of stirring out of their houses at a late hour that night. New girls are initiated on that night into the

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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mysteries of witchcraft. When girls are initiated into witchcraft they are taken away by force, and are taken to all the most powerful *bongas* in succession, and taught to invoke them. They are also taught *mantras* and songs and by degrees they cease to be afraid. The beginner is made to come out of the house with a lamp in her hand and a broom tied round her waist. She is then conducted to the great *bongas*, one of whom approves of her and when all have agreed she is married to that *bonga*. After this she can also marry a man in the usual way. When the girl has learnt everything she is made to take her *Sidatang* (degree) by supposedly taking out a man's liver and cooking it with rice in a new pot; then she and the young woman who is initiating her, eat the feast together; a woman who has eaten one such stew is said to be completely proficient and can never forget what she learnt. If any girl refuses to take the final step and will not eat human flesh she is caused to turn mad or commit suicide. Those however who have once eaten human flesh acquire a craving for it.

Should any outsider happen to come their way during these dances and sacrifices, the stranger is challenged and if he be found to be a mere wayfarer and not an inquisitive spy, he is warned on pain of death not to speak to any one of what he may have seen or heard. On his promising not to utter a word about it he is permitted to depart. Should he prove faithless, it is said, he is sure to be killed by magic. I am citing below a story about this from Bompass (Folklore of the Santal Parganas).

In the village of Mohulpahari there was a youth named Jebra. One night when he was coming back

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754 very late he met with a crowd of witches standing under
539 a hollow Mowah tree.

He managed to struggle free and run away. Two days after this those witches caused him to fall from a tree and break his arm. *Ojhas* failed to cure him The arm stiffened and maggots formed and in a few days Jebra became speechless and died.

683 How strong the belief of witchery amongst the Santals is even today can be easily judged from the following case of actual witch-murder reminding us of England and Europe, a few centuries ago.

A Santal of the name of Mangal Soren of the village of Bijapur, in the district of Santal Parganas, murdered a Santali woman of the name of Gaura Murmu believing her to be a witch who had caused the death of Rajam
[692] a Santali, through her witchcraft. The case was heard at the Patna High Court by Justices Kulwant Sahay and Sir T. S. Macpherson on 5th January, 1933 He (Mangal Soren) was convicted and sentenced to death.[1]

756 **Spirit Doctor—the Santal Ojha**

A type of Shamanism is present in full swing amongst the Santals though the authority of the headman is always respected. The Shamans among the Santals have degenerated into mere physicians with higher types of knowledge which in its theory entails communication and, partly, control of the supernatural world. Thus when the herbal doctor fails, men with knowledge of divination and favoured

1. Reported in a Calcutta daily, paper Amrita Bazar Patrika 7th Jan. 1933.

4; Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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tell him 'Now let us hear the oracle'. The *Jan* then takes his fee which is a rupee and tells them the name of a *bonga* or a witch who is at the bottom of their troubles.

Then they return to their village. If the *Jan* says that a *bonga* is giving the trouble then the patient will promise sacrifice. If the *Jan* declares any woman to be a witch, this woman is harassed in every possible way, fined and driven out of the village, and at times killed.

At present the *Jans* are, according to Santal belief, not like the old righteous ones. The *Jans* of ancient time got their knowledge through dreams at night or through visions in the daytime, not possessed by a divination spirit like *Jans* of the present day. Now-a-days the *Jans* keep informers who find out and tell them all particulars. *Jans* of to-day are very careful in fixing the blame. They generally fix the blame on some *bonga* or other in preference to a witch.

Classification of the supreme, superior and supernatural beings: It is very difficult to attempt a classification of the orders of the supernatural beings which constitute the religious belief of a community. The classification would often imply the existence of a notion of hierarchy of the supernatural beings, one being far superior to the rest. It is curious to observe that this supreme being is never worshipped in the faith that he can never work out any evil. As for the rest the rank may be determined in the order in which worship is offered to them. But here again the difficulty would lie in the fact that a particular occasion would demand predominance being given to particular spirits. Thus the classification would be more or less a division in parallel lines, for it

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wait for men. Women are protected from the designs of these ghosts by the iron bangle which they wear.

Ghosts of the dead and other private spirits who are given the title of *boiga* form part of the stock-in-trade of the two classes of people among the Santals who deal regularly with the occult- the magicians and the witches. They are bitterly opposed to each other's influence, and they clash for the most part on the battleground of sickness and disease. An exhaustive treatise on the Santal attitude to disease has been published, and shows conclusively that, as with ghosts so with sickness, the ideas of the Santals are common to all the lower strata of society in North India.[1] These ideas are not simple but complex, and range from the realm of the rational to the fantastic. Disease is sometimes ascribed to natural causes, particularly when the chain of causation is fairly obvious and can be repeated in a series of experiments; there is a whole class of food described as *batol*, which means that it is unwholesome. There are hundreds of remedies that require no supernatural aid to make them effective. Some remedies are the property of all, while others are the property of individuals and the knowledge of their ingredients is a closely guarded secret. Chaitan of Churimara began his career as a physician in response to a specific need. When he was a young man a friend had come to him in great distress and said that his boy was vomiting blood. He turned to Chaitan and asked him if he knew of any medicine that would be good for the boy. Chaitan was so sorry for his friend that he promised to do something, although when he said this he had no notion what he should do. As he was setting out for his friend's house he prayed to *Cando* and asked that he might be shown what he ought to do; at the same time he shut his eyes and kicked at the soil. As he opened his eyes again he saw a plant, which he immediately dug up. He ground the roots to make a medicine, and the boy recovered from his sickness. Since then he has applied the same remedy to many other cases. One of his patients had been extremely ill, he said, but was now the father of four or five children! He has been in great demand as a physician, and claims that *Cando* subsequently revealed many remedies to him. Sometimes it is claimed that remedies are made known in dreams. The plant that was first revealed to Chaitan was the *upel tandi* plant, which has a red flower.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.

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draws from his arm, chest or thigh is mixed with some sun-dried rice until the whole is saturated. The *ojha* then proceeds to scatter the rice on the ground and prays to the spirits to spare the sick man from further interference. He confirms his diagnosis by oracle by examining the patient and in particular by feeling his pulse, and apart from his power with the spirits he has a stock-in-trade that includes many remedies, spells, and also powers of exorcism. This is resorted to at once in certain cases such as snake bite. The *ojha* squats down beside the sick person and takes in his left hand a peacock feather or sometimes one or two twigs from an old broom, and these he passes along the patient's body without touching it, moving from the head to the feet and chanting the correct spells as he does so.

The magician always warns his clients that there is a possibility of error in his diagnosis, for it is the common belief that witches can interfere with the process of divination in order to draw attention away from themselves. Sometimes at an early stage, but usually when the illness persists in spite of all attempts at a cure, the suspicion of witchcraft arises, and a second divination reveals that a witch is at work. Once the suspicion has been voiced the whole village is concerned in the consultation, and the headman walks through the village exclaiming in a loud voice near each house: "Beware, for if the sick man does not get well we shall deal with thee!" More *ojhas* are consulted, and once agreement has been reached that witchcraft is operating, then steps have to be taken to locate the witch. The villagers are as a rule reluctant to proceed to this step and only do so when other measures have failed, for no one can tell in advance whether the witch will be found in his own house or not. At times frivolous accusations of witchcraft are made in order to pay off an old grudge, but the fear of the real thing is very strong. The oil divination has to be confirmed by some other means, one of which is the ordeal of placing twigs in water. Some freshly cut twigs are placed in the mud at the water's edge of a pond and vermilion is placed on them. The twigs represent the various households and spirits, as the drops of oil do in the oil and leaf method. The twig that withers first helps to fix the direction in which the villagers must look for the answer to their suspicions. Another method of divination is to place some rice wrapped in a leaf in a white-ant hill; if the ants attack the rice immediately, then witchcraft is involved.

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When it has been established that a witch is at work and that she lives in a certain house or village, the villagers of the sick person proceed to the *jan*, or witchfinder, who must give precise information about the individual who is a witch. None of the *jans* in the area are Santals, but the latter consult them quite freely. These men are notorious for having their scouts in the countryside, and they manage to secure all the information that they require before the party of villagers comes to them. They uphold their reputation not only by finding witches, but through being credited with second sight in other matters. They are consulted about lost and stolen property and about straying cattle.

All the witches of the Santals are women. This suggests that women find some compensation in a "private" cult for the fact that they are cut off from active participation in the tribal worship of the spirits. The general term for a witch is *ḍan*, and ordinarily the *ḍan* is reputed to be a member of a secret society with its own ritual and magic. Undoubtedly there are women who believe themselves to be *ḍan*. The *ḍan ḍhakin* is one who possesses some kind of evil nature and is able to put the "evil eye" on others. The fear of these witches is responsible for the fact that Santal houses are built without windows. When sometimes they leave an opening in the wall, they see that it is very small and so placed that no person standing outside will be able to look at any of the individuals inside, especially at night. The *ḍan jugin* are persons who use magic and know sorcery.[1] They acquire influence over certain *boŋgas*, and they make use of material objects in doing so. One of the tasks of an *ojha* who declares that there are buried *boŋgas* at work in a house is to locate them. He finds them buried in the house or the courtyard in the form of stones with human hair tied to them. The *ḍan* can gain control of a person and cause madness, a point that is well brought out in a story that is related here in the form in which it was told. "There was a youth in our village about sixteen years old, named Monmotha. One day last year he was going through the jungle from Calta to Beltwala; he returned at about noon, and on his way he had to pass a *boŋga than*. As he was passing it he was struck with fear, and when he reached home he was out of his senses and began to talk a

[1] The distinction between witchcraft as an influence and sorcery as a magic art using material objects made by E. Evans Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford University Press) seems to find some correspondence here.

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754 lot of nonsense. The people of the house consulted the oil oracle
754 and found that a *boŋga* had possessed him. They did their best
755 to exorcize the spirit, but the boy only became worse and began to wander about in the open. After a few days he left his home and did not return. Again they consulted the oil oracle and saw that he had been pounced on by a *ḍaṇ boŋga*; by trying to
754 exorcize it they had only made him worse. From time to time the herd boys used to see the youth, but when they went to catch him he ran into the jungle. When he saw that the folk were trying to get hold of him he went over to Gurma hill, about seven miles from Calta, and lived there; he used to be seen there occasionally. His parents went there to try to bring him home; they stayed in the neighbouring village for three or four days, but they were unable to do anything. A few days later it came to be known that he was regularly visiting the house of a female *jan*. He went there at night to drink water from a brass pot that she placed for him. The boy's father heard about it and watched the place one night. Sure enough, the boy came and drank the water out of the pot, but when he saw his father he ran away. There has been no news of him from that time to this; no one knows where he has gone or where he stays or what he eats. His father says that he had become very thin and had long hair and long nails. They have not found him yet." The fear of witchcraft is a fact of everyday experience among the Santals; the possibility that evil forces can disrupt and disturb their lives, robbing them of the fruit of their labours and mocking at their prayers, is never far from the surface of their minds.

754 Although they fear greatly the influence of the *ḍaṇ*, they
683 take vigorous action to rid their village of her presence once they have been convinced that a particular person is a witch. Very often they take some steps without going to the extreme of consulting the witchfinder. They act on the suspicions revealed by the oil oracle and confirmed by eccentric behaviour on the part of some individual who lives in the house that has been indicated. The nature of the action depends on the extent of the injury that has been inflicted, and is left at times to the initiative of the principal victims. It is extremely difficult to obtain authentic evidence of particular cases, but I can personally vouch for examples where women have been severely beaten, other cases where the whole house has been fined for "keeping" a witch, and some where all the members of a family have been driven from the village or have themselves preferred

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to leave. On one occasion I was informed that a woman had been killed as a suspected witch, but it was impossible to make a satisfactory investigation; and on another occasion I was asked to see the body of a young man where the villagers were convinced that witchcraft had been responsible for his death. It appeared to be a case of poisoning. Fortunately, some of the evidence relating to witchcraft and murder has been documented. Murder by Santals is comparatively rare, but fear of witchcraft is one of the most frequent motives at work. Statistics have been published for the Santal Parganas for the period 1931–40. During this period there were seventy-eight cases of homicide by Santals before the courts, and of the seventy-eight it was definitely established that sixteen were due to accusations of witchcraft.[1] It is reasonable to infer that the actual number was somewhat larger, for in most such cases the sympathy of the community is on the side of the murderers, and so it becomes a fairly easy matter to conceal the crime.

It appears that in other parts of North India the magician, or *ojha*, is a dealer in "black magic",[2] but among the Santals the order of *ojhas* might almost seem to have been called into being because of the need to defend society against the evil influence and the sorcery of witches who are the enemies of society. The *ojha* is a benefactor of society and seeks to overcome witchcraft by invading the territory of the witches and using their weapons. Each of the opposing camps is prepared to lay hands on any weapon that may serve its purpose.

The same truth is evident in all the Santal's dealings with things that he cannot understand. The attitudes summed up in the terms "magic" and "religion" are both in evidence. It is not usual in these days to distinguish sharply between them.[3] Magic is used by the Santal as a tool to accomplish many and varied ends. It is not absent from his dealings with the spirits, and it can be used for social as well as antisocial ends. It does

[1] S. M. Naqavi, "Santal Murders", an article in *Man in India*, September 1943, Vol. XXIII.

[2] W. Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 443: "In Northern India the worker of black magic is the Ojha, a term derived from the Sanskrit Upādhāya, 'teacher', and the Syāna, 'cunning man', who follow the traditional methods handed down from their predecessors. Their stock-in-trade is a collection of Mantras or spells, many based on the magic of the Tāntras, 'rule, ritual', used in the cult of the Sakti or female energy, by which they are supposed to acquire the power of controlling spirits or demons, and of forcing them to obey the orders of the sorcerer."

[3] Cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1945, p. 72: "Magic for us, though it may not postulate any transcendent reality, is an integral part of primitive religion."

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bitten by a snake as he slept on his verandah one night. He did not rouse until it was too late to apply any effective remedy. His relatives who were present subsequently told a story of sublime self-command and faith. He bade them farewell: "Do not be concerned about me, but always believe in God; although my body is being destroyed, my spirit cannot be destroyed. And follow the example of my brothers and myself, who never had a quarrel." He read to them from his New Testament. In the words of a nephew who wrote me a letter shortly afterwards: "Many people came from round about when they heard of his death to show their grief. My uncle preached the name of Jesus right up to the time of his death."

Dosoroth ascribed his freedom from the molestation of spirits to his belief in the One God. The heathen Santal considers that the process of transferring allegiance from one to the other is fraught with grave dangers. Christians put themselves beyond the pale of the tribe and so they do on the whole escape from the attention of the malevolent powers to whom Santals as a whole are subject, but when a recent convert meets with misfortune it is because the spirits have been able to get at him. A young man in Barikul died from typhoid about six months after his Baptism, and the common verdict was that the *bongas* had taken their revenge.

Many of the early converts were first drawn to the Church in order to gain some freedom from oppression. From time to time examples occur of people who wish to escape trouble which they have reason to fear from their own people. Families have been baptized when the mother has been accused of witchcraft and they have been persecuted accordingly. In the early period a family became Christian through the man having married a cousin. Although cross cousin marriages are not entirely prohibited, they are frowned upon as they serve to complicate relationships. This couple were subjected to local persecution, and at one stage, I am told, they feasted their fellow villagers in an effort to be reinstated in society. Ultimately, however, they sought the refuge of the Christian community. Their home was within two miles of Sarenga and so they were near to other Christians. Others sought relief from harassing landlords and their agents. They thought that the right way to deserve the help of the missionaries was to do first what the missionaries asked them to do in matters of religion. For although missionaries did relieve much distress, they proclaimed that what they really wanted to see was a change of heart in the people. There